《欧元区利率四月可能上调》

The president of the European Central Bank has said that a rise in eurozone interest rates was "possible" at its next policy meeting in April.

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Jean-Claude Trichet said the ECB was "in a posture of strong vigilance" against rising inflation.

He said the rate-setting committee may have to act in the light of recent "price shocks" due to the sharp rises in commodity??????? prices.

On Thursday the ECB decided to keep rates at 1% at this month's meeting.

Speaking at a press conference, Mr Trichet stressed that no decisions had yet been made.

"We are never precommitted. The decision will be taken at the next meeting by the governing council," he said.

But analysts said it was a clear signal that a rate rise next month was likely.

Jacques Cailloux, of RBS European Economics, said that the ECB appeared to have "pre-announced a rate hike for its next policy meeting.

"This is a shock to us relative to our earlier expectation of ECB [rates] remaining on hold till September," he said.

Mr Trichet said that the ECB may need to act to prevent "secondary effects" from the current inflation shock sweeping the 17-nation eurozone.

Second-round effects are wage and price rises, which could be discouraged by raising interest rates.

Higher energy, food, and raw material costs have helped push up inflation throughout the world, and analysts are speculating??????? that the UK will raise rates sooner rather than later.